1. Background

The School Safety Study resulted from one of the recommendations put forward by the Safety Answers for Education (SAFE) Commission in 2000. The Commission was created in May 1999 in order to establish a non-legislative working group "to examine the numerous issues surrounding strategies for reducing the risk of violence on school campuses across the state".

Pursuant to ARS 15-231.03 the Arizona Department of Education is required to create a study focused solely on safety issues in public schools. The Research and Policy Division (R&P), Arizona Department of Education, has completed Phase I of the study on School Safety and the purpose of this report is to present the findings of the study.

2. Organization of the study

This study is being conducted in two phases.

- **Phase I** was conducted in 2000-01. This phase has two components.

  (i)   The first component comprises a survey of schools on their policies and programs regarding school safety.
  School Safety Survey: Policies, Programs, and Practices. The random sample for this survey consists of 317 schools, and the data gathered will be kept strictly confidential.

  (ii)   The second component includes in-depth interviews on issues related to school safety.
  School Safety Interviews: In-depth case studies. These in-depth interviews were conducted in 16 schools with various school personnel (64 total) in order to capture a wide spectrum of issues pertaining to school safety. This data will also be kept confidential.

- **Phase II** will be conducted in 2001-02 and will include a survey of incidents of school violence.
  School Safety Survey: Incidents of Violence. The random sample for this survey will consist of the same 317 schools as the policy survey in Phase I.

3. Methodology

The Research and Policy Division adapted the **S**chool **S**urvey **O**n **C**rime and **S**afety (SSOCS), a national survey from the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education to develop the School Safety Survey. Adapting the national survey will allow for meaningful comparisons between Arizona and national results.

The Research and Policy Division adapted the interview protocols for the in-depth interviews from the National Study of Delinquency Prevention in Schools, U.S. Department of Education.

The survey instrument on policy and the interview protocols (Phase I) were finalized by the end of October 2000. The instruments were shared with school-level representatives before the final drafts were approved.

The School Safety Survey: Policies, Programs, and Practices (Appendix 1) were mailed to the 317 schools by the end of November 2000 and were received by ADE by the end of February 2001.

The School Safety Interviews: In-depth case studies were conducted between December 2000 and February 2001.

Preparing the schools

Staff members at R&P shared the initial research design with representatives from districts and schools across the state. Involving schools in the planning process provided some very crucial insights for the study. Their suggestions were used to strengthen the survey and the interview protocols.

Schools will also be involved in developing Phase II of this study.

Sample Design

Survey component

A sample of 317 (traditional and charter) schools for the survey component was generated using the following steps:

$$S = (\chi^2 NP\, (1\text{-}P)) \div (d^2\, (N\text{-}1) + \chi^2\, P\, (1\text{-}P))$$

N = Population = 1808
P = Probability = 0.50
d = Degree of accuracy = 0.05
χ^2 based on 0.95 Confidence interval = 3.841

$S = (3.841 * 1808*0.50\ (1\text{-}0.50)) \div (0.05^2\ (1808\text{-}1) + 3.841 * 0.50\ (1\text{-}0.50))$
Sample = S = 317

SPSS was then used to generate the 317 sample schools using its random generation feature.

Interview component

1. The matrix included in Appendix 2 was used to determine the 16 schools that were interviewed. Note that these 16 schools were part of the 317 schools that were randomly selected for the survey component.

2. Based on the schools' staff lists the interviewees listed in Appendix 3 were interviewed in the 16 schools. Details on the interview protocol can be found in Appendix 4.

4. Analysis

Once the strategy for analysis was established, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to input and analyze the survey information. N5, the latest version of the NUD*IST (Analysis of **N**on-numerical **U**nstructured **D**ata by **I**ndexing **S**earching and **T**heorizing) software for qualitative data analysis, was used to code and analyze the interviews.

5. Importance of this study

This study is the first of its kind to be conducted by the Arizona Department of Education. One significant aspect of the study is that it was based on a random sample of public schools in Arizona, as opposed to the "census" model of research traditionally used. This allows for anonymity and possibly more accurate responses.

This methodology also helps reduce time and resources spent on the project. The process of random sampling is useful because each and every school does not have to be contacted for every study, rather different sample of schools can be used for different studies, allowing schools more time for conducting their routine activities.

Another significant aspect of the study is that information from the interviews has been kept confidential. This has been done with the aim of gathering accurate and reliable information for policy discussions.

The study is of even greater significance because it has been designed to be consistent with a national study. This will help in making meaningful comparisons of school safety issues that exist in Arizona with respect to the nation as a whole.

Given the nature of interview-based qualitative studies, the interview component of this study is not "representative" of school safety issues in the public schools of Arizona. However, it does provide a broad overview of the situation that can assist in meaningful policy discussion. It also helps in substantiating and scientifically documenting anecdotal evidence that has existed to this point.

6. Caveats in the study

Note that the interview component is a summation of interviewee perceptions and the study needs to be understood in that light. What this implies is that an interviewee's perception on any issue in the study is just that—a perception. As can be noted from the table below, while the perception of the interviewee might be accurate (cells a and d) it might also include inaccurate perceptions (cells b and c). What this also implies is that when any incident is mentioned for a school it is because individuals in those schools chose to discuss it. It is possible that other schools have similar incidents but the interviewees chose not to discuss it.

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	Incident perceived as existing	Incident perceived as not existing
Incident exists	a	b
Incident does not exist	c	d

This study did not include perceptions of parents and students due to time constraints. Another factor that contributed towards this decision was that interviewing students is a very detailed process due to confidentiality reasons and needs to be conducted with caution. The second phase of the study might include the student component.

Due to time constraints this report provides descriptive information only. The data will be analyzed further and detailed interpretations and explanations will be provided in the future.

7. Important note

As per the requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) absolutely no personal information was provided on students by any of the 64 interviewees in course of this study. Also, since this is a confidential study no information will be provided on school districts or schools in this report. This is applicable to both sections of this report. Any reference to schools, in the interview component, will be made through their cell numbers in the matrix and not by their names. It will be essential to identify the school type for comparisons but the school names will be withheld. See Appendix 2 for details on the interview matrix.

8. Organization of the report

This web-based report has been organized as follows. First, tabular information will be presented on findings from the School Safety Survey: Policies, Programs, and Practices. Next, school safety themes pertaining to external factors (community and parents) and internal factors (students and schools) will be discussed from the School Safety Interviews: In-depth Case Studies.